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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: BARAK APPROVES CONSTRUCTION OF 455 WEST BANK
HOUSING UNITS

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. On September 7, Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak publicly approved the construction of 455 new housing units in nine existing West Bank settlements. Issuance of construction permits represented the last step in the GOI approval process. Settler organization sources said these projects have long been in the pipeline. In at least one case (a sports park in Ariel), construction is already complete. End summary.

West Bank Construction Approved

12. (C) On September 7, the Israeli MoD announced that Minister of Defense Ehud Barak had approved the issuance of construction permits for 455 new housing units, a sports park, and a school in nine West Bank settlements. The permits are concentrated in settlements located west of the route of the separation barrier (either as constructed or planned), with the exception of 20 housing permits issued for the Jordan Valley settlement of Maskiyyot. A full list of the new permits is included at para 7.

13. (C) Note: GOI approval of construction permits represents the last step in the settlement construction process. Broadly speaking, the GOI's review and permitting process begins with approval of a neighborhood development plan. Following the plan's approval, public tenders are announced and issued, followed by the awarding of bids and selection of a contractor. (This step is optional, as the GOI generally reserves the right not to issue bids, even to the highest bidder.) Once bids are awarded, the GOI takes the final step of issuing construction permits. This step generally follows the signing of construction contracts and the provision of financial guarantees to the concerned construction companies by homebuyers or developers. End Note.

Reaction from NGOs and Settler Leaders

14. (C) Dror Etkes of Yesh Din explained that Barak's approvals were the final step for these 455 units. These new units, in addition to the 600-plus starts previously approved for 2009, bring total new construction in the West Bank this year to date to approximately 50 percent of its total 2008 level. (Construction in 2008 exceeded construction in 2007 by 45 percent, according to Etkes.)

15. (C) David El Hayani, mayor of the Jordan Valley Regional Council, claimed that the GOI had already promised to build these units, as they were already included in town plans previously approved by the GOI. "The Ministry of Defense called me about the approvals," El Hayani said. "I told

them, 'thanks, but you already approved them last August.' They approved nothing." In Maskiyyot, El Hayani noted, the Jordan Valley Regional Council had already received GOI funding for construction of infrastructure to support new housing units, and construction is well underway.

¶6. (C) Sources in Ariel Mayor Ron Nachman's office confirmed that the GOI issued final permits for a sports park which has already been completed. These sources said Israel's Civil Administration had previously told them that the park lacked necessary permits and could therefore not be used. Barak's approval, these sources said, meant that the sports park could now be put into use.

¶7. (U) Below is a list of the GOI-approved permits, according to press reports:

-- Har Gilo (149 construction permits), 1.8 km from the Green Line, located in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc south of Jerusalem, was established in 1972. According to the 2007 census, 462 residents live in Har Gilo.

-- Alon Shvut (12 construction permits), 4.6 km from the Green Line, located in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, was established in 1970. According to the 2007 census, Alon Shvut has a population of 3,291.

-- Modiin Illit (84 construction permits), 0.6 km from the Green Line, located on Route 1 between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, was established in 1996 and granted city status in ¶2008. According to the 2007 census, Modiin Illit has a population of 38,047.

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-- Givat Zeev (76 construction permits), 4.9 km from the Green Line, located northwest of Jerusalem, was established in 1983. According to the 2007 census, Givat Zeev has a population of 10,873.

-- Maale Adumim (89 construction permits), 4.5 km from the Green Line, located east of Jerusalem, was established in 1975 and granted city status in 1991. According to the 2007 census, Maale Adumim has a population of 33,019.

-- Kedar (25 construction permits), 6 km from the Green Line, located south of Maale Adumim, was established in 1985. According to the 2007 census, Kedar has a population of 801.

-- Maskiyyot (20 housing permits), 15 km from the Green Line, located in the Northern Jordan Valley, was originally established as a pre-military settlement in 1982. According to David El Hayani, mayor of the Jordan Valley Regional Council, there are currently 10 families living in Maskiyyot.

-- Ariel (permit for sports park, already constructed), 16.1 km from the Green Line, located north of Jerusalem, was established in 1978. According to the 2007 census, Ariel has a population of 16,600.

-- Har Adar (permit for new school), located next to the Green Line and west of Jerusalem, was established in 1986. According to the 2007 census, Har Adar has a population of 2,743.

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